

"NAME IT AND WE CAN TELL YOU ABOUT IT BECAUSE WE SAW IT," could well be a statement from members of the crew of the USS BELL, pictured above. The destroyer, shown here as she appeared dressed for Navy Day off Jinsen, Korea, in 1945, is at Mare Island being prepared for joining the 19th (Reserve) Fleet.

Record of Destroyer USS Bell Is Released

"Jolly good shoot! You saved the day and the battalion," was the Australian version of "well done" received by the destroyer USS BELL, now at Mare Island Naval Shipyard, on Independence Day 1945, off Balikpapan, Borneo.

A battalion of Australian troops, advancing on an airstrip outside Balikpapan, found themselves heavily outnumbered, and unable to retreat to safe positions before sundown without loss of the battalion. The BELL, patrolling offshore, came to the rescue, firing full broadsides at the Japanese shore batteries, from which the enemy was forced to retire, allowing the Australians to retreat in good order.

"We fired three salvos a minute, spotting our fire at six-minute intervals," says Comdr. Burton H. Shupper, USN, Bellflower, California, the BELL'S Commanding officer. "Right in the middle of the melee a little PC boat came over the horizon and signalled us, 'We have U. S. mail on board for you.' We signalled back, come alongside on our disengaged side—and she did just that. Each terrific blast of our full salvo of five-inch guns nearly lifted the little PC clean out of the water—but she passed the bags over to us—and the mail went through!"

That was only one highlight of the BELL'S round-the-world Odyssey which has taken her from the Navy Yard, Charleston, S. C., where she was commissioned in March 1943, to Argentina, Newfoundland; Scapa Flow, Scotland; Eniwetok, Majuro, Hollandia, the Philippines, Okinawa, Korea, Tsingtao and Chinwangtao.

Had Varied Duties

The BELL'S duties have been varied. She escorted the British battleship QUEEN MARY, with Prime Minister Churchill aboard, to Halifax in 1943. Operating with the British Home Fleet, she aided

in the search for the elusive German battleship Von Tirpitz. With the Famous Task Group 58 in the Pacific in 1944, she participated in the air strikes on Hollandia, Truk, Guam, Iwo, Palau and the Philippines.

After the First Battle of the Philippine Sea, the BELL and other destroyers covered the withdrawal of the damaged cruisers HOUSTON and CANBERRA, for which Lt. Comdr. J. S. C. Gabbert, USN, Los Angeles, California, then Commanding officer, received the Silver Star Medal and Letter of Commendation. Later, when the escort carrier OMMANEY BAY was struck by a suicide bomber off Leyte, the BELL assisted in fighting fire and picked up survivors.

Following the Japanese surrender, the BELL was ordered to Jinsen, Korea, to cover the occupation forces. She "toured" North China, carrying passengers, mail and light freight as the first ship on the North China Destroyer Mail Run, visiting Taku, Weihaiwei, Tsingtao and Shanghai.

The BELL is now undergoing overhaul at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, preparatory to joining the 19th (Reserve) Fleet.



Comdr. Burton H. Shupper